

Opinion



Another Viewpoint

Tap water better deal

By Gigi Kellett

Corporate Accountability Project

After years of serving bottled water, restaurants around the country are now thinking outside the bottle and serving only tap water. From New York to California, prominent restaurants are removing bottled water from their menus. So is the largest food coop in the United States — the Park Slope Food Coop in New York City.

This may leave readers wondering why gourmet purveyors are dispensing with bottled water in favor of something, well, a bit more common. The answer is in the packaging.

While labels may conjure up images of pristine mountain streams, the truth behind the cool-friendly image is that bottled water is bad for the environment. Last year, the manufacture of plastic water bottles generated more than 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions and required the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Every year more than four billion pounds of plastic bottles end up in landfills or as roadside liner. Given that only three states have container deposit laws that address plastic water bottles, the recycling rates for these bottles pale in comparison to soft drink and juice bottles.

Three decades ago the bottled water boom began when it appeared on the menus of high-end restaurants. Just like consumers, many restaurateurs have been led to believe that what's in the bottle is somehow safer and more reliable than what is on tap. However, the restaurant industry is turning back the clock on the bottled water industry by refusing to act as a vehicle for promoting such a wasteful "product."

Chefs and business owners are learning that as much as 40 percent of bottled water actually comes from the same source as tap water. What's more, tap water is much more highly regulated than bottled water. And in the same way restaurants are concerned about the source of the foods they serve, the decision to stop serving hauled water often derives from a concern about what is happening upstream, so to speak.

In addition to crowding landfills and contributing to global warming, the bottled water industry is threatening local control of public water. To put five dollar bottles of water on tables here, communities from India to Mexico, Texas to Michigan and Maine to California are losing control of what was once considered a basic human right — something you couldn't put a dollar value on.

Serving tap water is a convenient way for restaurateurs to maintain their commitment to quality. Pledging to *Think Outside the Bottle* reduces waste, saves patrons money, and protects the primary resource that allows the restaurant business to thrive.

Tap water goes great with any cuisine.

The preceding column was distributed by MinutemanMedia.org. For questions or comments, readers are encouraged to visit this website.

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

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How is your driving?

According to a recent study by a national insurance company, Kansas ranked first in the country when it came to safe driving.

Based on a written driver's test of 20 questions, the study concluded Kansas' average score was 84 with New Jersey coming in last place with an average score of 69.9. The testing was done using more than 5,500 licensed Americans from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

What I found interesting were the questions drivers had the most difficulty answering.

For example, questions about yellow lights and safe following distances were missed.

Eighty-four percent could not identify the correct action to take when approaching a steady yellow traffic light, and 73 percent could not properly identify a typical safe following distance from the car in front of them.

Here were a few other findings the insurance company cited:

- Apparently, the older the driver, the higher the test score was. In fact, drivers 35 years and older were most likely to pass.
- Women scored lower on the tests and more women failed the test than men (20



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

percent versus 13 percent).

- The Northeast had the lowest average test scores at about 76 percent and the highest failure rates nearing 20 percent.

- The Midwest had the highest average test scores at 81 percent and the lowest failure rates at 11 percent.

- Kansas replaced Idaho's 2007 ranking as having the most knowledge on the subject.

- Almost all the respondents, 98 percent, know what to do when an emergency vehicle with flashing lights approaches, what to do when hydroplaning and the meaning of a solid yellow line.

The insurance company, GMAC Insurance, based in St. Louis, Mo., also asked respondents whether or not driving tests should be standardized?

The statistics showed that about three in five drivers believe a permit or license ap-

plyment should be required to take a standard, national written driver's test with questions applying to all 50 states.

In addition, 78 percent believe that each state should have the same basic traffic safety regulations, such as speed limit, parking regulations and pedestrian right-of-way.

About two in three or 63 percent believe that drivers should be required to re-take the Division of Motor Vehicle road test after a certain age; 87 percent of those respondents believe it should be no earlier than age 60, and 41 percent think the test should be re-taken each year.

With Kansas ranking the highest on test scores and New Jersey the lowest, here are a few other neighboring states and how they did. Nebraska took 3rd, Missouri, 14th, Colorado, 15th, Oklahoma, 22nd, and Illinois, 32nd.

Anyone interested in taking the test to see how they compare to the average driver can go to www.gmacinsurance.com

If nothing else, it is a good way to brush up on safe driving tips.

Good luck and happy driving.

Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column normally appears on Mondays.

Increasing consumer confidence

By John Schlageck

Kansas Farm Bureau

Premises identification program is the latest, greatest promotional campaign designed to encourage Kansas livestock owners to protect their livestock. Brought to you by the Kansas Animal Health Department, this coordinated effort focuses on educating Kansas farmers, ranchers, landowners or anyone else who handles or manages livestock about the importance of registering locations where animals are held.

This new effort by the Kansas Animal Health Department is called Locate in 48. This slogan refers to a system that will allow 48-hour trace back if an animal disease outbreak were to occur. This system will help protect animals, increase consumer confidence in the nation's food supply, better connect producers to the global marketplace and protect the Kansas way of life.

Through the program, livestock owners are asked to voluntarily register their premises. The Kansas Animal Health Department de-

finies premises as any location where animals are managed or held. This includes farms, ranches, hobby farms, veterinary clinics, stables, livestock markets and any other location where livestock is kept.

Registration will allow animal health officials to quickly contact livestock owners or caretakers in the event of an animal disease outbreak or animal health emergency.

"We are very excited to introduce the Locate in 48 campaign to Kansas," George Teagarden livestock commissioner for the Kansas Animal Health Department says. "We believe this program will help Kansas ranchers understand the animal health and safety benefits of registering their livestock premises and preserve the future of farming and ranching for generations to come."

Veteran rancher and state lawmaker Dan Johnson from Ellis County says he wants to ensure everything is being done to protect consumer confidence.

"Because I am a fourth-generation rancher I know how important it is that we are able to protect our animals from widespread disease," Johnson says.

The livelihood of all livestock producers depends on the health of their animals. It's important to register each and every premise where livestock are held. It's the right thing to do to protect individual livestock businesses across Kansas and all those who are involved in the animal industry.

Premises registration is simple, and there is no cost to register. By registering, each livestock owner/operator is taking an important step toward prevention and animal disease control in Kansas.

For more information about premises registration or to register online, visit Kansas.LocateIn48.com.

Livestock owners can also print a copy of the registration form off the website and fax it to 785-296-1765 or mail it to the Kansas Animal Health Department, 708 SW Jackson St., Topeka, KS 66603-3714. Registrations are also accepted at local Farm Service Agency offices or over the phone at 785-296-2326.

Editor's note: John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley

